

# Coproduction

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## COLUMN A

Mijatovic, Marko. 2017. Notations on site. Basics: Project Management in Urban Design. Hamburg. CC BY-SA 4.0.

The problematisation of the urban through its use often leads through the banal or the trivial. Michel Foucault (2015) noted in his text *Subject and Power* in reference to the operative role of philosophy in contemporary politics that banal facts, known to everyone, are still facts. 'And if you're dealing with trivial facts, you have to figure out - or at least try to figure out - which exceptional and possibly very specific problems are involved (ibid., 83).' The video below shows participants of the summer school *Building a Proposition for Future Activities* during the dismantling of the large tent in which the *Project Days* and the *Cooperative Review Process* took place. Although this scene is a side stage and covers nothing more than 3 people beating a carpet properly, a motivated description of the situation can be prolific for further project management work. In particular so, because project management more often than not is a multisited practice: project management work is effective on construction sites, in boardrooms and behind a computer among others. The transposition of aspects over various sites of project management work has influences on the realisation of the entire project or a series of projects. "About Column A" features a conceptual practice about "coproduction" related to the problematisation of the urban through its use.

## ABOUT COLUMN A

[https://youtu.be/RbbglgL\\_I-k](https://youtu.be/RbbglgL_I-k)

Krämer, Sybille. 2018. *Medien, Boten, Spuren*.

Today's foundational conceptualisation of coproduction was developed by a group of researchers at Indiana University and The University of North Carolina in the late 1970s. The group's work aimed to better understand increasing crime rates in Chicago after police officers policing neighbourhoods were displaced from walking the sidewalks to behind the steering wheels of police

cars. “Coproduction involves a mixing of the productive efforts of regular and consumer producers” (Parks et al. 1981, 1002). The pertinent aspect opening up the issue of coproduction is the research group’s notion that coproduction is often overlooked or met with turned up noses by “regular” service providers – organised bureaus and firms and public administrators – yet attributed an increasing importance “due to fiscal pressures and partly due to evidence regarding the inefficacy of their own unaided efforts (ibid., 1001).” Policing is not without reason the main topic in the 1970s study. A rising number of neighbourhood watch groups, corruption and myopic policing strategies sparked a general debate on cities and crime in the United States and the transformation of urban governance in what later would be described as the early days and sites of neoliberalisation. In today’s words: The research group argued for a situational analysis of urban governance focusing on relations across hypothetical dichotomies in order to build problem solving approaches from there rather than based on simplistic models.

Among them was later Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom, who continued to reflect on the issue in her scholarly activities. Her revised concept refers to coproduction as the “process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not ‘in’ the same organization” (Ostrom 1996, 1073). This concept met harsh criticisms from public administration purists – mainly because between the lines, Ostrom’s work seeks to uncover that purity in the understanding of economic action between public and private, market and state or government and civil society is counterproductive if not violent. She kept insisting that removing artificial walls surrounding (false) dichotomies with the aim of changing the views of social sciences towards the hypothetical “Great Divide” was in fact necessary in order to draw a more complex picture of the actual events. Ostrom empirically analyses the realisation processes of major social and technical infrastructure projects with a focus on coproduction as capacity to constructively process operational challenges. “No market can survive without extensive public goods provided by governmental agencies. No government can be efficient and equitable without considerable input from citizens. Synergetic outcomes can be fostered to a much greater extent than our academic barriers have let us contemplate” (Ostrom 1996, 1083). Ostrom’s late work on the management of commons frequently revisits the early work on coproduction with the aim to organise the interplay of a heterogenous set of actors through a variety of means. Her work is commonly part of research, teaching and practice projects in spatial and infrastructure planning, amongst others. There, problematising coproduction promises to re-gain an apparently disappearing knowledge of how the actual events (ought to) unfold in space. In urban development, increasing complexity on

a number of levels and dimensions (such as planning and building as well as environmental laws, institutional actors and their inter-relations and responsibilities, construction techniques, compartmentalisation) is diagnosed as loss of control and of overview, leading to the perception of a crisis of the planning and designing disciplines (Zimmermann 2017). However, a loss of control and overview only appears from the perspectivation of the actual events through well-established nominal responsibilities. Are there cases of Ostrom's original problematisation of coproduction in architectural education? Is there a similar "Great Divide" hypothetically and in fact drawing the line between what is possible and what is not?

## REFERENCES

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